

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 12105 310836Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PA-01 HA-05 BIB-01 CPR-01 SSO-00
NSCE-00 SS-15 SP-02 L-03 H-01 SY-05 INRE-00
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PM-05 DODE-00 CA-01 IO-13
DRC-01 /077 W

-----019464 310846Z /23/46

O 301721Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2326
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
USICA WASHDC

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 12105 VICE 2105)

STATE FOR EUR/SOV, PA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CSCE, SOPN, UR
SUBJECT: EMBASSY REPRESENTATION OVER HARASSMENT OF
CORRESPONDENTS

1. IN WAKE OF SEVERAL INCIDENTS DURING PAST WEEK INVOLVIN
MANHANDLING, OSTENTATIOUS SURVEILLANCE, CONFISCATION OF
FILM, AND OTHER PETTY HARASSMENT OF U.S. NEWSMEN ATTEMPTIN
TO COVER (A) ORLOV TRIAL, (B) MAY 23 DEMONSTRATION OF
FEMALE REFUSENIKS IN ALEKSANDROVSKIY GARDEN, AND (C) MAY
24 HOSTAGE EPISODE AT FINNAIR OFFICE, PRESS ATTACHE ON
MAY 25 CALLED ON MFA PRESS DIVISION COUNSELOR ZHURAVLEV
TO DELIVER ORAL REPRESENTATION.

2. EMBOFF RAN DOWN SERIES OF INCIDENTS IN SOME DETAIL,
NOTING THAT PRESUMED PLAINCLOTHES MILITIA/KGB PERSONNEL
CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, CONDUCTED
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 12105 310836Z

THEMSELVES "CRUELY" AND PHYSICALLY ABUSED CORRESPONDENTS.
AUTOMOBILES PRESUMABLY BELONGING TO "ORGANS OF AUTHORITY"
HAD ENDANGERED LIFE AND LIMB BY CUTTING OFF NEWSMEN'S
CARS, PLAYING BUMPER TAG, ETC. PRESS ATTACHE EXPRESSED
EMBASSY'S "INCREASING CONCERN AND ALARM" OVER SUCH UN-
ACCEPTABLE CONDUCT, PARTICULARLY WHEN A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER
OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS OCCURRED OVER SUCH A SHORT SPAN OF

TIME. EMBASSY COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THERE WAS IN EFFECT "A SYSTEMATIC PATTERN OF INTIMIDATION, AN ATMOSPHERE OF ARBITRARINESS". EMBASSY CANNOT ACCEPT SUCH INTERFERENCE WITH LEGITIMATE COVERAGE OF NEWS EVENTS BY JOURNALISTS, NOR DIRECT VIOLATION OF HELSINKI COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS FOR NEWSMEN. SOVIET JOURNALISTS IN U.S., NOTED PRESS ATTACHE, ARE NOT SUBJECTED TO SUCH CRUDE TREATMENT AND IF MISTAKES DO OCCUR, U.S. SIDE IS SINCERELY CONCERNED AND UNDERTAKES IMMEDIATE MEASURES TO CORRECT THEM. EMBASSY WAS NOW ASKIN MFA TO TAKE SIMILAR STEPS TO ENSURE THAT INCIDENTS INVOLVING U.S. CORRESPONDENTS WERE NOT REPEATED.

3. DURING DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWED, EMBOFF MENTIONED INFORMALLY TO ZHURAVLEV THAT SOVIETS SEEMED INSISTENT UPON CREATING DIFFICULTIES FOR THEMSELVES. HE CITED PLUG-PULLING INCIDENTS DURING APRIL 19-23 SECVISIT, WHICH DID NOT PREVENT PHOTOS AND FILM OF MCCLELLAN DEMONSTRATION FROM REACHING WEST BUT DID RESULT IN TWO U.S. PROTESTS AND EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY UNFAVORABLE TO USSR. PRESS ATTACHE ASSURED ZHURAVLEV THAT HIGHEST LEVELS OF DEPARTMENT WERE GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT TREATMENT ACCORDED AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, AS WAS DEMONSTRATED DURING SECVISIT, AND THAT IT WAS IN EVERYONE'S INTEREST TO ELIMINATE "CHILDISH" BEHAVIOR OF SOVIET ORGANS OF CONTROL AND DISPENSE WITH UNNECESSARY PROBLEMS.

4. ZHURAVLEV, FOR HIS PART, SAID HE APPRECIATED FRANK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 12105 310836Z

AND LOW-KEY PRESENTATION. IN ABSENCE ANY WRITTEN PRESENTATION FROM EMBASSY, ZHURAVLEV SAID HE WOULD BE SURE TO PASS ON SUBSTANCE OF EMBASSY'S VIEW (HE TOOK COPIOUS NOTES). HE ASSURED THAT SOVIETS WERE NOT "REASSESSING OUR POSITION REGARDING THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT PROVISIONS CONCERNING JOURNALISTS" AND THAT SOVIET UNION "IN THE INTEREST OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING" WAS ATTEMPTING TO FACILITATE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR NEWSMEN (HE RECITED STOCK LIST OF SOVIET IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS AREA OVER PAST THREE YEARS), ALTHOUGH HE WAS CAREFUL TO HEDGE BY NOTING THAT SOVIETS WERE TRYING TO DO THIS "IN PRINCIPLE". ZHURAVLEV CLOSED BY SAYING THAT SOVIETS WOULD "STUDY" THE MATTER AND BY DELIVERING OFF-HAND COMMENT THAT "YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES I THINK OUR MILITIAMEN ARE NOT TOO EDUCATED." PRESS ATTACHE HOPED THAT MFA COULD BEGIN THE EDUCATION PROCESS.

5. FYI, AT LEAST THREE U.S. NEWSMEN - KLOSE OF WASHINGTON POST, FISHER OF L. A. TIMES AND REDMONT OF CBS - HAVE WRITTEN THEIR OWN LETTERS OF PROTEST TO MFA OVER SPECIFIC INCIDENTS OF HARASSMENT. OTHERS INDICATED THEIR INTENTION TO DO SO, BUT THEIR FIRES SEEM TO HAVE DIED DOWN OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS. SEVERAL BRITISH

CORRESPONDENTS ALSO SAID THEY WOULD BE WRITING TO MFA ON
THIS SCORE, AND WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH BRITISH
EMBASSY CONCERNING BEST WAY TO MAKE OUR CONCERNS KNOWN.
WE EXPECT BRITISH PRESS ATTACHE TO MAKE SIMILAR CALL ON
MFA/PRESS WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HARASSMENT, JOURNALISTS, DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW12105
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780227-0047
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978058/aaaaagds.tel
Line Count: 121
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5a922aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2751785
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EMBASSY REPRESENTATION OVER HARASSMENT OF CORRESPONDENTS
TAGS: SOPN, UR, US, CSCE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5a922aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014